

## HARDING TO STUDY PROBLEM OF CANAL TOLLS ON GROUND

Trip to Panama Foreshadows  
Plan to Exempt American  
Shipping.

By David Lawrence.  
Special Correspondent of The Evening World.

HAZARD, O., Nov. 4 (Copyright, 1920).—President-elect Harding has a special purpose in wanting to visit the Panama Canal. The full significance of the trip will not become apparent until after March 4. But the truth is Mr. Harding is in earnest about reviving the Panama Canal tolls controversy. He wants to see American ships exempted from the payment of tolls and will press for that exemption when he is inaugurated.

President Wilson found himself confronted with the same question when he took office in March, 1912. The Democratic platform written at Baltimore in July, 1912, had gone on record in support of the action of the Democratic Congress in voting to exempt American ships from the payment of tolls. But Great Britain insisted that this piece of legislation was in effect a discrimination against British ships and a plain violation of the terms of the Hay-Pauncefote treaty. That compact between England and the United States was made as a direct result of the surrender of certain rights England had to another inter-oceanic canal in Nicaragua, and the understanding was that if Britain relinquished her rights America would not discriminate against her.

Senator Lodge and Elihu Root, who also was in the Senate at the time, made eloquent speeches saying the law ought to be repealed. Indeed, President Wilson found Republican as well as Democratic support "in both Houses of Congress when he declared that America could not afford to take advantage of other nations by insisting upon a selfish interpretation of an ambiguous article in any treaty. He also hinted at large and vital questions of diplomacy when he said that the law ought to be repealed and friendship with Great Britain maintained on account of "matters of far nearer and more delicate concern."

Just what Mr. Wilson meant by the foregoing phrase was never publicly explained, though it is commonly supposed in Washington that the President was playing for Britain's friendship because of the delicate relationship between Japan and the United States over the California Alien Land Law.

Circumstances have changed to some extent since 1912. In the election which has just closed millions of

Americans of Irish descent looked to the Harding standard. Aside from the fact, however, that the new President's position has pleased those in our population who are opposed to everything British, the determination to revive the controversy does not have its origin in that quarter. Somebody's influence urged the revival of the matter when the Republican platform was written at Chicago last June.

Senator Harding has been impressed with the necessity of securing advantages for the American merchant marine, and the visit to the Panama Canal is the beginning of a thorough study of the entire subject by the next President of the United States. What Great Britain will do or say about it is quite another question.

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